

My name is Kevin Booker, Jr., I'm a resident of New London, CT and I'm writing to you today to express my support for Senate Bill 948.

Connecticut may be among the top 5 states in the country for K-12 education, but we are doing a huge disservice to so many of our students. The past year has made it clearer than ever that our schools and our children need to be funded fully, equitably, and immediately.

It's no secret that Connecticut's public schools are deeply racially and economically segregated. There is a \$639 million funding gap between Connecticut districts that serve a population that is majority white versus those that serve a majority BIPOC population. A student's race should not determine whether they are successful in school and we have the obligation to make sure it doesn't. By passing S.B. 948, you can help address these disparities, reduce the state's racial funding gap by 68%, and make sure students are at the center of the conversation about education funding.

As I have learned more about Connecticut's school funding system, I have discovered that it is, by design, complicated. We don't fund all of our students in the same way and instead have multiple funding formulas. The additional funding weights for English Learners, students who are economically disadvantaged, and students who are living in concentrated poverty only apply in one funding formula, and students with additional needs who attend other types of schools don't have their needs factored into funding.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult on many of us, especially on our K-12 students. Over the last 12 months, the vast funding inequities that have always existed in Connecticut's public schools have been highlighted, and while some students are thriving, others are barely surviving.

More than ever, communities require greater resources to meet the needs of their students and they cannot wait for ECS dollars to be phased in over the next 7 years. We need full ECS funding now so our students can have the resources they need to recover from such a tumultuous year.

Our students deserve to be funded based on what they need in order to be successful in and outside of the classroom. Our students who attend magnet schools, charter schools, and other public schools of choice deserve to be funded through a formula that takes their learning needs into account. Our English Learners, students who are economically disadvantaged, and students navigating through their education in communities that experience concentrated poverty, all deserve additional funding at a rate that makes a real, tangible difference.

Our students, our schools, and our communities need real change, and we need it now.

Thank you for your time, and I urge you to support S.B. 948.